

Late fall is the bull selling season in the Shortgrass Country. The vendors of papered oxen are very prominent in October and November and perhaps into the first weeks of December. Glib auctioneers and shouting ringside personnel are able to work the hollow horn operators to pitches of extravaganza that'd make old-time tent revival preachers feel like the bottom had fallen out of their collection plates.

The pedigrees in the catalog and the relatively new rating system called Expected Progeny Difference, or EPD's increase the fever. In all these flourishes, Prince Catfish Head of Polywog's deeply ingrained inclination to tear down a minimum of 45 feet of woven wire fence per day and waste his remaining strength roaming across the countryside hunting for premature heifers to breed, is overlooked and forgotten.

I was late catching on to this EPD business. By the time I understood it, I'd already bought one black bull that was rated so low on the increasing milk production that his future sounded like his grandchildren were going to have to be raised on the sacked milk powder that's sold over at the wool warehouse.

The Scotch fellow who ran the Mertzon bank for so long and so well used to say that the best bloodlines in cattle were the ones that developed into herds that were free of such defects as financing liens and double mortgages. We'd be in mighty sad shape today had breeders listened to that old man. All we'd have would be piles of money and security for our old age.

Our non-milk producing bull, I guess, can be used to clean up the dry end of our herd, I looked back over his record the other day and he sure has a low birthrate. So his momma must have started him out early toward being such a knot-headed prospect.